

Springfield, PA — Speaking to a Cabrini College class of freshman and seniors studying social justice, Congressman Sestak discussed the policies, and his perspective, on the goals of social justice. For example, he presented an overview of his position on the reauthorized President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) and the outlook for US global antipoverty efforts in light of the dire economy.

"The students' interest in foreign policy issues reflects the emerging concern for issues affecting the global climate," said Congressman Sestak. "The AIDS/HIV pandemic is ongoing and widespread. The disease has had a devastating effect on the demographic profile of African society. As AIDS has spread, it has decimated men and women in the prime of life, leaving an unbalanced population both very old and very young, with an atrophying group of working-aged adults in the middle. This growing population of orphans, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, continues in an entrenched, deepening poverty. And while Africa is the continent most devastated by AIDS, it is important to not overlook the estimated 8.6 million people in Asia or the 500,000 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia inflicted with the illness."

PERFAR is a five-year, \$15 billion initiative to combat the global HIV/AIDS epidemic that will expire in 2008. PEPFAR has a very strong emphasis on the provision of treatment and care for people with AIDS, with only one-fifth of the money being for HIV prevention work. To properly treat the HIV epidemic, we must reevaluate these appropriations, and stress prevention work. Senator Richard Lugar introduced S 1966, the HIV/AIDS Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2007, which would reauthorize PEPFAR until 2013. Congressman Sestak noted, "I believe this program provides an invaluable tool for HIV/AIDS care, but to be more effective, more weight should be placed on prevention programs. While the re-authorization of PEPFAR is currently under Senate jurisdiction, I cannot vote for it, but please be assured I will watch this issue closely and will support this re-authorization when it comes before the House."

The presence and prevalence of AIDS and poverty are interconnected. Thus, "we can begin to reverse the cycle of poverty and disease through common-sense measures that begin with prevention," said Congressman Sestak. "Education is the cornerstone of an effective campaign to reduce poverty and the spread of AIDS across the world. A program of prevention, coupled with the greater availability of life-preserving medicines could be the beginning of the end for poverty and death. Other programs, such as needle exchange, are also worthy of the serious contemplation befitting such serious problems."

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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